

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (may his blessings remain on us for a long time),
Vice Principal Darul Uloom Karachi

Memories

(Episode 1)

I hesitate in calling myself a Deobandi in terms of school of thought because this smells of sectarianism, and also because some people, when they hear the word Deobandi, have the misunderstanding that Deobandi is a religious sect which has taken a different path from the majority of the Muslim Ummah. In reality the scholars who relate to the school of thought of Darul Uloom Deoband, in their beliefs and actions, subscribe to the same balanced understanding of the Quran and Sunnah of the Messenger (peace be upon him) which the Ummah has been inheriting from generation to generation for the past fourteen hundred years. They have not laid foundation to a new sect, rather they uphold the same beliefs and follow the same actions which the majority of the Ummah has accepted and has been acting upon. However if ever they saw some mud being flung on them, they tried to remove it with wisdom and steadfastness. Due to this, some people who bore malice towards them tried to promote the view that Deobandi is a different sect. On this topic Hakeem Ul Islam Hazrat Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyab Sahab's (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on him) book "The Maslak of the scholars of Deoband" is an excellent book, and I have further explained this point in the introduction of this book. What I wanted to say at this point is that despite considering the scholars of Deoband my ideals in religious matters, I hesitate in calling myself a Deobandi in terms of school of thought because it smells of sectarianism. But by birth I am definitely a Deobandi and by the favour and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala I had the good fortune of being born in the town where the Darul Uloom Deoband produced such mountains of knowledge and excellence, resolution and steadfastness, and exaltedness of character, the equals of which it is difficult to find in this last era.

In Deoband our ancestors were famously known by the title of "Mian Ji". "Mian Ji" was a title in those times about which my respected father (may Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) wrote:

"The elementary schools, which were spread throughout villages and towns, used to teach the Noble Quran, and after that Urdu, Persian and Mathematics. The standard of their education was higher than today's middle schools. The teachers of those elementary schools were called by the title of "Mian Ji". Besides religious knowledge they used to possess purity in their deeds and actions. For example Mian Ji Nur Muhammad, who was the Sheikh (spiritual mentor) of Haji Imdadullah Sahab Muhajir Makki (may Allah Ta'ala have mercy on both of them) was famous in Lohaari, and Mian Ji Munnay Shah Sahab was a saint in Deoband from whom Kashf (unveiling of normally hidden knowledge) and Karamaat (miracles) were profusely witnessed."

My respected father (may Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) also wrote:

“I could not find any reliable genealogy of my ancestors with a chain of trustworthy narrators. However Shariah has not put a condition of a continuous chain of reliable narrators in these matters, rather whatever is heard from one’s elders is considered sufficient. I have heard from many elders of my family that our family descended from Hazrat Usman (may Allāh Ta’ala be pleased with him).”¹

I was born on 5th Shawwal 1362. I saw the same date written in the personal notebook of my respected father (may Allāh Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him). Since, in those times, only Hijri months and years were used for recording dates, my respected father (may Allāh Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) did not write the date according to the Gregorian calendar. But later, after using calendars which convert Hijri dates into Gregorian dates, it was found to be equivalent to the 3rd of October 1943. And I heard this event from my respected mother (may Allāh Ta’ala’s mercy be upon her) that the day I was born, on the very same day on the same bed on which I was put, a snake fell on it from the roof. And if this snake was not removed and killed, perhaps this world would have been saved from my evil deeds.

Anyway! I got to spend only four years and seven months (October 1943 to May 1948) in the town of Deoband. And I only spent that phase of my life there in which a child is oblivious of everything besides his world of play and amusement, and later when he grows up the life of those days is forgotten. But I remember the events of the Deoband of my childhood as if I am seeing them with my eyes.

This was a time when the houses of Deoband did not have electricity, fans, water taps, or gas or oil stoves. Candles or lanterns were used instead of electric light bulbs. Instead of taps water was stored in clay *matkas*² or brass *gharas*³, to fill which the services of a water-carrier were often used, who would carry a big leather water-bag and deliver the water house-to-house. Fashionable and well-to-do localities would install a common borewell⁴. The metal handle of this borewell would be pushed up and down to extract water, which would be filled in some bucket or *lota*⁵. Besides providing water, another benefit of this was that a good exercise of the hands, rather the whole body would take place. Since I

¹ These details of our genealogy are registered in my respected father’s (may his secret be sanctified) book “My respected father”.

² A matka:



³ A ghara:



⁴ A borewell:



⁵ A lota:



was too small to bear such rigorous physical activity, I would amuse myself by looking at others swinging from its handle. *Surahi*¹ (long-necked metal flasks) were used for drinking water in homes, which would become cold by getting slaps from the cold wind. Hand-held fans were used instead of electric fans, which come to mind even today during power outages.

In May and June, when heat would emanate from every direction, a water-man (who would also be called *bihishti* or *maashki*) would sprinkle some water from his water-bag onto the brick floor. And the fragrance of the moist floor would diffuse into the atmosphere when the motionless air would be pulled to one's face with hand-held fans, and thus some coolness would also be achieved. In this kind of weather, when I would lie down in the courtyard on a netted *charpai*² with my mother, there would be no veil of gas, petrol or diesel between me and the starry sky, and neither would the smallest star in the sky be dimmed by artificial lights. I would stare for a long time at the twinkling stars amid a web of the galaxy and the whiteness emanating from it. And we children would think that the sky is a road that Allah Ta'ala has created for the angels. I would fall asleep imagining the coming and going of the angels on this celestial highway.

I wish to begin narrating these memories with some random events from my childhood. But it is necessary to first introduce the members of my household.

There is no need to introduce my respected father Mufti Muhammad Shafee' Sahab (may Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) because I am known because of him, not that he is known because of me.³ Whatever I am today is because of my relationship with him. If, with the Grace of Allah, I received any goodness then it was through him, and if evil came it was because of not taking benefit from his company. In short, whatever I am, I am his:

If I am black-hearted then I am the stain of your garden of tulips

And if I am wide-faced then I am a flower of your spring

So Inshallah his mention will be made again and again in this biography.

From the time I opened my eyes I found my respected father (may Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) busy in two things. By that time he had resigned from the post of Grand Mufti of Darul Uloom Deoband and also from teaching there. However, many students had the desire of attaining the honour of

¹ A surahi:



² A charpai:



³ And, all praise is to Allah, I have mentioned about him in some detail in my book "My father my Shaikh", and the Mufti-e-A'zam edition of Al-Balagh was also published under my supervision. Besides several topics it also contains a detailed biography, which was later published as a separate book, by my respected brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafee' Usmani Sahab (may his shade be extended). It also contains a description of our family and ancestors.

learning directly from him, so at their request he would teach them at home. This arrangement was what is today known as tuition. But a big difference was that while today teaching tuition is a big source of income, in Madrasas (religious institutions) the relationship between a teacher and a student is devoid of self-interest. This is to such an extent that if it is found insufficient to teach a particular student only in the Madrasa, then teachers would not only happily teach them separately, rather they would fulfill the rights of the students with full responsibility. And to charge students any remuneration for this was considered inappropriate in the atmosphere of the Madrasas. Thus my respected father would teach them, with this same motivation, in our home or in the Masjid.

The Masjid of our locality was named “Aadeeni Masjid”¹ but people used to call it “Deeni Masjid”. At first our respected paternal grandfather Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen Sahab (may Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) was the trustee². Later my respected father (may Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) became the trustee and would sometimes also teach there.

Secondly whenever he was at home I found him writing something. During summer nights we would hang a lantern at a door to get light in the courtyard of our house. My respected father would be seen dipping his wooden pen (which was called “Kilik pen” at the time) and writing something even under that lantern. In those days fountain pens were not in fashion. Besides this, he had made a small room beside his sitting place which we used to call “Hujrah”. This was his place of worship from where the sound of his recitation of Quran and Zikr could be heard.

How could I realize the status of my father’s achievements in terms of his knowledge and actions? (In reality I haven’t recognized it completely even today). But in my small world he was the center of love and affection. And he too used to love me. Almost all my elder brothers have tasted, besides his love, his scolding and beating, but in my share came only his love. Once (when I was around 12 years old) I accompanied my mother to visit my elder brother in Lahore. At that time my respected father wrote in a letter to my elder brother:

“It is also difficult for me to pass the days without Muhammad Taqi (may Allah Ta’ala protect him).”

During our stay in Deoband I only remember one of his travels, to Madras, in which separation from him was a difficult test of my patience. The salt on the wound was that at the time of his return I had convinced my brothers to let me accompany them to the railway station to receive him. The main motivation of going was to welcome my respected father, but there were two other motives. Firstly, we

¹ “Aadeena” means “Friday” in Persian and “Aadeeni” meant the Masjid in which Friday prayer took place.

² Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yaseen (may Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him) was born one year before the establishment of Darul Uloom Deoband, in the year 1282 A.H, and was thus almost the same age as Darul Uloom Deoband. And I have heard his statement from my respected father many times that we saw the time when everyone (in Darul Uloom Deoband), from the Shaikh Ul Hadith to the security guard was a Sahib-e-Nisbat Wali of Allah. This grandfather of ours was a special Mureed of Qutb Ul Aqtab Hazrat Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi, and was a peer of Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (may Allah Ta’ala’s mercy be upon him). He remained a teacher of Persian and Mathematics at Darul Uloom Deoband all his life, and many generations of residents of Deoband attained the honour of being his student. My respected father has detailed his biography in his book “My respected father”.

would have to take a Tonga (horse-cart) to go to the railway station. A Hindu Tonga-man “Phaggu” was famous in our locality. In such cases he would be pre-booked, which we duly did. We rarely got the opportunity to travel in a Tonga because nearby distances could be covered by walking and slightly farther distances would be covered with my respected mother in a Doli¹ (Palki). We rarely travelled such distances where a Tonga would be required. Thus, while going to the railway station, I would get to enjoy this royal mode of transport, the very thought of which was very enticing. Secondly, the railway station itself was a place of entertainment for us, which we rarely got the opportunity to visit. Thus this was a very enjoyable event for me in many respects.

But just when we were about to leave, somehow my hand got burned and I had to remain at home for treatment. I was thus deprived of the opportunity to go to the station. However I cannot forget the pleasurable moment when my respected father entered our home. Before turning his attention to anything else he called out for me and came forward and took me in his arms. His thick black beard, under the light of the lantern, and his wide face filled with love and happiness is engraved in my memory as if I am looking at him now.

¹ A Doli (Palki):

